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Health and Family Planning Sector Program: Reducing Fertility and Protecting the Health of Nepalese Families

What are Nepal's key issues in the health sector?

Nepal has some of the worst health indicators, both regionally and globally. Maternal and child mortality rates are among the highest in the world. Average life expectancy is 59 years, with half the population comprised of children and adolescents. Fertility rates remain high. Women, on average, give birth to four children. Furthermore, while the HIV prevalence rate is believed to be about 0.5%, the World Health Organization estimates that HIV/AIDS will be the leading cause of death among 15-49 year olds in ten years unless the epidemic is controlled now.

- At the current growth rate of 2.4%, Nepal's population will double in 29 years.
- A woman dies every two hours as a result of pregnancy-related complications.
- One out of 11 children dies before his or her fifth birthday, with pneumonia, diarrhea, measles and malnutrition the leading causes of death among children under the age of five years.
- Every day 14 people become infected with HIV, with female sex workers, injecting drug users, and men who migrate to India for seasonal work most at risk.
- Seventeen million people live in areas where they may be exposed to three leading vector-borne diseases - malaria, Japanese encephalitis, and kala-azar.
- While the conflict has had relatively low impact on the national health system, the delivery and monitoring of health care services has been irregular in heavily-impacted conflict areas, and it has had negative psychosocial impacts on children.

What does USAID do to support the Government of Nepal in health?

USAID has a bilateral agreement with His Majesty's Government of Nepal (HMGN) for a five-year (2001-2006) health and family planning program. With an average annual funding of \$20 million, USAID is the lead donor in the sector. Activities under this agreement aim to implement HMGN's long-term goal of reducing fertility and child mortality, and protecting the lives of Nepalese families.

- Family Planning - expanding access to and the use of quality, voluntary family planning services.
- Maternal and Child Health - reducing child mortality by increasing access to quality selected maternal and child health services.
- HIV/AIDS - preventing the spread of and controlling HIV/AIDS by enhancing the prevention-to-care continuum, and treating other sexually-transmitted infections among most-at-risk groups.
- Health Sector Reform – supporting HMGN Ministry of Health efforts in decentralizing health care services from the national to the district level.

- Infectious Diseases – controlling infectious diseases by strengthening surveillance and minimizing antimicrobial resistance.
- Conflict Mitigation - supporting the immediate health, psychosocial, and educational needs of children affected by the conflict through local non-governmental organizations.

What are the results?

USAID's support in the health sector is one of the most longstanding and successful development assistance programs in Nepal. Through a strong and collaborative partnership with HMGN, activities reach more than 11 million men and women of reproductive age and 3.5 million children under the age of five.

- The fertility rate has decreased by 20% since 1991, due to increased access to quality family planning services.
- Child mortality has declined by more than 40% since 1991, due to increased availability of key child health services.
- Vitamin A supplementation of children 6-60 months of age has become a national program, averting about 15,000 child deaths each year.
- Community-based treatment for child pneumonia – the number one cause of child mortality in Nepal – has expanded to cover two-thirds of all expected cases of pneumonia in 16 densely-populated districts.
- HIV/AIDS prevention efforts have increased condom use significantly, with over 80% of female sex workers and their transport worker clients in the Eastern Terai reporting use.
- Pilot malaria and kala-azar programs have increased community-level knowledge about these diseases.

Who are the key partners?

USAID is part of a large external development partner community working in partnership and collaboration with HMGN Ministry of Health officials. These donor partners include the British Development Agency, Australian Development Agency, German Development Agency, Japanese Development Agency, the United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Development Program, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, the World Bank, the German Development Bank, and the World Health Organization. USAID also works with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. USAID implements its health sector program through several major partners that in turn work with over 50 local NGOs and community-based organizations.

For more information:

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